

Tex. Primary Suffrage Law

BY HORTENSE WARD.

The primary suffrage law passed at the recent special session of the legislature grants the privilege of voting in all primary elections to the women of Texas who are 21 years of age or over and who possess the other qualifications required of male voters. There is no poll tax, fee or charge of any kind required of women voters for the year 1918. They must, however, register in order to vote.

The primary suffrage bill becomes effective June 26, 1918, and as one of the provisions thereof is that all women who offer to vote in the primary election must register fifteen days before the date of the primary, all women must register between the dates of June 26 and July 12 in order to qualify for voting. Registration must be at the office of the county tax collector, in records provided by the commissioners' court according to the provisions of the act. After registering, the registrant receives from the tax collector the certificate of registration, the duplicate thereof remaining in the office of the tax collector, from which he prepares lists of qualified voters for the election judges. The woman voter presents this certificate of registration to the election judge when she offers to vote. In the event that same should be lost she makes out affidavit of its loss at the polling place in the same manner as a man who has lost his poll tax receipt or exemption certificate.

Women vote at the same places in the precinct, in the same booths and place their ballots in the same ballot boxes as provided for men.

The other qualifications required of the woman voter, being the same as required of men, are that she must have lived in the state one year and the county six months and must be an American citizen. If single, she must have been born in this country or her father must have completed his naturalization papers during her minority or she must have herself completed her naturalization papers.

The alien act passed at the same special session makes American citizenship a requirement for voting in primary elections. This does not apply to general elections as the constitution of Texas provides that foreigners who have taken out first papers and lived in the state and county the required time may participate in said general elections. This is an unwise privilege and the legislature passed the alien act to remedy the matter so far as was in its power.

Another law passed at the same time which affects all electors in the coming primary is known as the literacy act and requires each voter to make out his own ballot without assistance. It is now a felony to give assistance in the making out of a ballot. A like bill was passed at the Thirty-third regular session and vetoed by Governor Colquitt. This is a law that those interested in clean politics have long worked for, and prevents the manipulation of the ignorant and foreign vote to some extent at least.

The preparation of the ballot is merely marking out with a black pencil, which will be supplied in the booth, the names of all candidates except the one for whom you wish to vote, leaving only one name for each office or position.

Registration and voting is simple and requires only a few minutes. The effect of sane, wise and conscientious exercise of the privilege cannot be overestimated at this time. So many of the men who have stood for the best in governmental affairs have become disfranchised by reason of their entrance into the service of the United States that it behooves every woman who loves her country and values beneficial laws and their enforcement to carefully consider the situation, register and vote. It is duty you cannot shirk. A duty that no one else can perform for you. Especially should you look closely into the principles, standards and qualifications and the record of those who offer for congress and the legislature where the laws governing your state and country are to be enacted or repealed. Let no one woman fail to do her duty at this time. Through all the ages one of the prices paid for war has been the loss of those laws that were for the protection of those who, by reason of their youth, weakness or infirmity, were entitled to the consideration of society. Let the women of Texas see that we do not pay that price.

Dr. Frank Crane says the American people are the worst singers in the world. Dr. Carl Venth should not remain silent under this indictment.

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